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The Clinton Approach to Gun Laws:

**Harass Lawful Citizens,
Prosecute Fewer Criminals,
Coddle Terrorists for Political Gain**

In the *Historical Review of Pennsylvania*, published in 1759, Dr. Benjamin Franklin gave his view of the relative value of liberty and safety:

They that can give up essential liberty to obtain a little temporary safety deserve neither liberty nor safety.

On March 1, 1993, newly inaugurated President William Jefferson Clinton expounded on why Americans *should* sacrifice liberty for safety:

We can't be so fixated on our desire to preserve the rights of ordinary Americans to legitimately own handguns and rifles . . . that we are unable to think about the reality of life that millions of Americans face on streets that are unsafe, under conditions that no other nation . . . has permitted to exist.

Since then, President Clinton has fought to restrict the Second Amendment like no other president in American history.

Is safety the President's primary concern? At the same time he advocates more gun laws, his administration nearly *halved* prosecutions for federal firearms violations. Worse, this month President Clinton set free 12 terrorists imprisoned for, among other things, 36 federal firearms violations. It seems President Clinton would deprive Americans of liberty *and* safety.

Giving Criminals a Bye

Since November, 1998, the National Instant Check System (NICS) — a Republican initiative — has stopped 100,000 disqualified persons from buying guns. Because many of these are criminals in search of weapons, prosecuting them ought to be a priority for the President. Yet the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms has referred only 200 cases — 0.2 percent — for prosecution. For every criminal the Administration pursues, hundreds of others get a bye.

Gun Control — But Only for Enemies of the Regime

This year alone, Clinton has proposed 38 new federal firearms weapons offenses. At the same time, he offered to set aside the 36 federal firearms convictions of 12 members of the Armed Forces of National Liberation (the Spanish acronym is FALN), a group devoted to the violent pursuit of Puerto Rican independence, whose terrorist acts have killed six Americans and injured at least 84 more. The deal was widely suspected to be an attempt to build support within New York's Puerto Rican community for a Senate bid by First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton.

President Clinton's pursuit of new gun laws while forgiving weapons violations of preferred constituencies amounts to selective enforcement of the law and gives the president the arbitrary power to forgive his friends and punish his enemies for committing identical acts. It is dangerous, tyrannical, and an affront to the Second Amendment's "right of the people to keep and bear Arms" and the Fourteenth Amendment's guarantee of "equal protection of the laws."

<i>TARGETING GUN OWNERS AND FORGIVING TERRORISTS, BY THE NUMBERS</i>	
FALN clemency grantees convicted of federal firearms violations	12
Imprisoned for possessing an unregistered firearm	12
Imprisoned for carrying firearms during commission of seditious conspiracy	9
Imprisoned for interstate transportation of firearms with intent to commit seditious conspiracy	9
Imprisoned for possession of a firearm without a serial number	3
Imprisoned for conspiracy to make destructive devices	3
FALN firearms convictions for which Clinton offered clemency	36
New federal firearms offenses proposed in Clinton's gun crime package (Youth Gun Crime Enforcement Act of 1999)	38
Disqualified persons prevented from purchasing a gun by NICS	100,000
Percent of NICS violations referred for prosecution	0.2
Percent drop in federal prosecutions for firearms violations since 1992	46

Sources: *Bartlett's Familiar Quotations*, CRS, Senate Judiciary Committee.

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